642, 728, 177, 565

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| Syria | MD1 |
| Israel | MF1 |
| Jordan | MG1 |
| Iraq | MH1 |
| Lebanon | ME1 |

/For an account of the political regime, social stratification, and Westernizing of administration under the British and French Mandates following the First World War, see 66: Bonné, M1 Middle East, category 116, pp. 88-101./

11: Hourani S-4 (no date) 1946 MD1 Syria MD1



the towns is scarcely above subsistence-level. In most parts of the country the huts of the peasants, made of wattle and mud-brick or in parts of stone, contain nothing but the barest necessities; and the greater part of the population live on a diet of bread, olive-oil, milk and perhaps fruit and vegetables in season. Famine is rare, and has not occurred on a large scale since the First World War; but malnutrition is very widespread. On account of this and of the absence of sanitation and the scarcity of doctors in the country districts, the standard of health is also low. Malaria, typhoid, trachoma and other diseases are endemic. The standard of living is highest in Beirut and the Christian parts of Lebanon, which have profited greatly from the savings and experience of the emigrants to the New World.

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The changes in the economic system are beginning to cause far-reaching changes in the whole social structure. In the larger towns the externals of life are almost wholly modernized. Clothes and foodstuffs, the construction and furnishing of houses and methods of transport all approximate to those in use in Europe. The old externals it is true still linger on; the camel and the motor-car jostle one another in the streets of Damascus. But it is generally recognized, and on the whole without regret, that it is only a matter of time until the old completely disappears. In the small towns and villages of the Christian portions of Lebanon, too, the process of Westernization in externals has gone far. In the smaller towns and countryside of the interior, the change is slower in coming; but motor-cars and roads have prepared the way for it.

The fundamental social forms, however, are slower in changing. The dominant social class is still that of the landowners, who continue to possess a semi-feudal status. No other social class is strong or self-conscious enough to stand against them. The cultivators have little effective power of moving from one estate or region to another; although intelligent, they are too unenlightened to have much effective sense of grievance or capacity for political or economic combination. Only in parts of Lebanon does there exist a considerable number of free and comparatively enlightened smallholders. As yet there is neither an industrial middle

545 class of importance nor an organized urban proletariat (although there are the beginnings of a trade-union movement). There does, it is true, exist a large commercial middle class in the towns, but it is not an autonomous class capable of challenging the social power of the landowners. For this there are a number of reasons: many of the merchants are Christians or Jews, and therefore frightened of coming into conflict with important vested interests; many are bound by family ties to the landowners, and not conscious of a difference of interest from them.

545 Although the power of the landowners has not yet been 178 challenged, almost certainly the coming generation will see its decline. The conditions which made it possible are ceasing to exist. Land is no longer the only source of wealth, nor is subsistence-agriculture by ignorant peasants the only practicable means of using it. The landlords have lost not only their economic but also their political function: their services as leaders of a feudal army and as tax-collectors have long since been dispensed with. It is not yet clear, however, which class will take their place. The processes which have taken place in parts of Europe—the transfer of power from landowners to capitalists, and the division of large estates into small freeholdings—may occur, but it is not necessary and perhaps not altogether desirable that they should. It is at least arguable for example that it would be better, economically and socially, to revive and develop the village community than to try to create a class of small farmers. Whether this be so or not, it is certain that great changes in the structure of classes are to be expected.

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178 Again, the patriarchal family system remains in existence, but its days are probably numbered. The claims of the family 621 are still prior to those of the individual member of it; but its solidarity is gradually being undermined by the ways of modern urban life and by the emergence for large sections of the population of alternatives to the cultivation of inherited land in the ancestral village.

178 The structure of the family is being radically transformed 562 by the change in the status of women. The change is particularly great among the urban middle class. Girls' schools have been opened, and it is possible for women to

3:Royal Institute of International Affairs U~4 (no date)1954 M1 Middle East
LEBANON MEI
SYRIA MDI



In neither country is there an officer caste or a strong military tradition, though the present Syrian regime is trying to create one.

## Social Survey

The ruling class in both countries is drawn from wealthy families; titles do not exist and the 'old' rich families, whose position and wealth come from land, mix freely with the 'new' rich families, whose money comes from commerce. There is no stigma in engaging in trade and even members of the upper class are merchants. A middle class of functionaries and employees has been growing up since 1948 in the three main cities. Their flats, between the splendour of the rich quarter and the huddle of the *suq*, are being built in quantities and their new, middle-class way of life is based on European standards. The mass of the people are artisans and labourers. The urban artisan approaches the middle class and the rural labourer approaches the hard life of the nomad; for the farm labourer the standard of living is generally low.

### *The Press*

The press of both countries is important but no one paper or group of papers has established an ascendancy. Damascus had at one time over twenty daily papers none of which could guarantee a circulation of over 3,000. The same state of affairs holds true in Beirut where most parties issue Arabic and in some cases French papers; there are also Armenian newspapers and one English daily.

Individual Lebanese have founded papers and *Le Commerce du Levant*, published in Beirut, has a standing comparable with *La Bourse Egyptienne*. In both countries press censorship has frequently closed down a paper only for it to re-emerge under another name, and in Syria the military dictatorship has reduced the press to a mere mouthpiece of official propaganda.

### *Education*

In both countries there are primary and secondary schools, and the number of schools and students increase each year. Primary education is compulsory, and although reliable figures of literacy are not available,[1] it may be assumed that the percentage of illiterates is decreasing in both countries, but is higher in Syria than in Lebanon. In Syria, most of the schools are run by the state and of the private schools (which are

[1] An estimate for Syria for 1947 given in UN, Dept. of Social Affairs, *Preliminary Report on the World Social Situation*, 1952, was 40–50 per cent.

25: Wantner S-5 (no date) 1948 MI Middle East
Lebanon ME1
Syria MD1



the land. In 1926–31, 182 villages comprising 181,000 hectares were colonized in small properties by 6,000 families. The Government of Latakia compelled large proprietors in the region of Homs to give up their villages in the district of Masyaf in 1929; the land was distributed among the occupying peasants and sold to them at a price to be paid for in ten annual instalments. The village of Jib Ramle was also settled in 1929, in part by occupying peasants, in part by refugee Armenians.

But the French administration did not complete the settlement of these areas. In some regions the Turks settled these lands with nomad tribes, who were themselves averse to cultivation and either rented the land to Alawi villagers or continued to live themselves as nomads on the land without cultivating much of it. Consequently this land is now very sparsely settled. Round Homs there are said to be 2,000 to 4,000 hectares with only 10 per cent of the land cultivated: this is some of the most fertile and best situated land in the country, and could be developed by colonization schemes.

In several respects the French authorities have modified the Turkish system in ways which strengthen the landowners against the cultivators. One of these was the sale of the extensive *Waqf* properties to business enterprises, irrigation concessions, or landowners. Another was the abrogation of the right of ownership acquired by ten years cultivation which benefited the small cultivators in enabling them to acquire new land.

Efforts were made to start co-operative and agricultural credit banks, but these never succeeded in breaking the peasant's indebtedness. Several large-scale irrigation schemes were started, but produced more water than could be used. The educational system did not extend to the villages. Within the framework of the existing system, these reforms did little to raise the standard of the peasants. As a mandatory Power the French relied on the collaboration of the wealthy upper class, that is, on the landowners, and so could make no fundamental reforms in the land system.

## POSSIBILITIES OF DEVELOPMENT

So far as dry land farming is concerned the possibilities of improvement are hampered by the dry summer, which necessitates a long period of fallow. However, it would be possible by